

## A DEMOTIC PETITION ABOUT THE MISCONDUCT OF AN OFFICIAL IN THE PAPYRUS MUSEUM IN SYRACUSE (P. SYRAC. 262)

The Papyrus Museum in Syracuse holds a fragmentary demotic *mḳmḳ* addressed to a royal scribe, photographed for the museum catalogue by Basile and Di Natale.<sup>1</sup> The *mḳmḳ* has since long been identified as the Demotic counterpart of the Greek ὑπόμνημα.<sup>2</sup> Just like the ὑπομνήματα, these documents were used as petitions and other memoranda of various nature.<sup>3</sup> P. Syrac. 262 (TM 316183) is a good example of a petitioning *mḳmḳ*. In this text a woman named Tamounis addresses the royal scribe Hor with a complaint about a dispute with the official Nechthembes (possibly a κωμάρχης: cf. infra). Only the very beginning of the actual contents has been preserved: the petitioner accuses Nechthembes of attacking her and casting her out of the village. The origins of their dispute remain unclear.

The margins of the papyrus are intact on the left, right and upper side, but the left side of the document is damaged: an inspection of the verso shows that the layer with the vertical fibres is missing. Below, a substantial portion must have gone lost, probably about two thirds if the original height was around 30 cm. The text is written along the fibres on a narrow strip of papyrus (7,5 cm), as usual for this type of documents.<sup>4</sup> All *mḳmḳ* that are currently known originate from the Ptolemaic period.<sup>5</sup> The handwriting of P. Syrac. 262 fits this date perfectly.

*P. Syrac. 262*

Arsinoite (?)

9+ cm (height) × 7,5 (width)

Ptolemaic

Ro

- 1 *w' mḳmḳ n Hr p3 sh 'Pr-ʿ3'*
- 2 *n-dr.t Ta-Ḳmn rmt(.t) Mn-nfr nty n P3-ʿsh-Hr'*
- 3 *Nḥt-H(n)b p3 shn n P3-ʿsh-Hr'*
- 4 *gm' r-hr=y iw=f 't[ 't n-im=y]*
- 5 *iw=f hwy n-im=y (r) p3 bnr p3 'tmy'*
- 6 *[...] hpr=y p3 (?) [...]*

Vo

- 7 *i.ir-hr vac. Hr [p3 sh Pr-ʿ3 (?)]*

Translation

Ro

A memorandum to Hor, the royal scribe, from Tamounis, a woman from Memphis who is in P-seh-Hor. Nechthembes, the administrator of P-seh-Hor is wronging me. He attacks [me] and he casts me out of the village [...] ... [...]

Vo

To Hor, [the royal scribe].

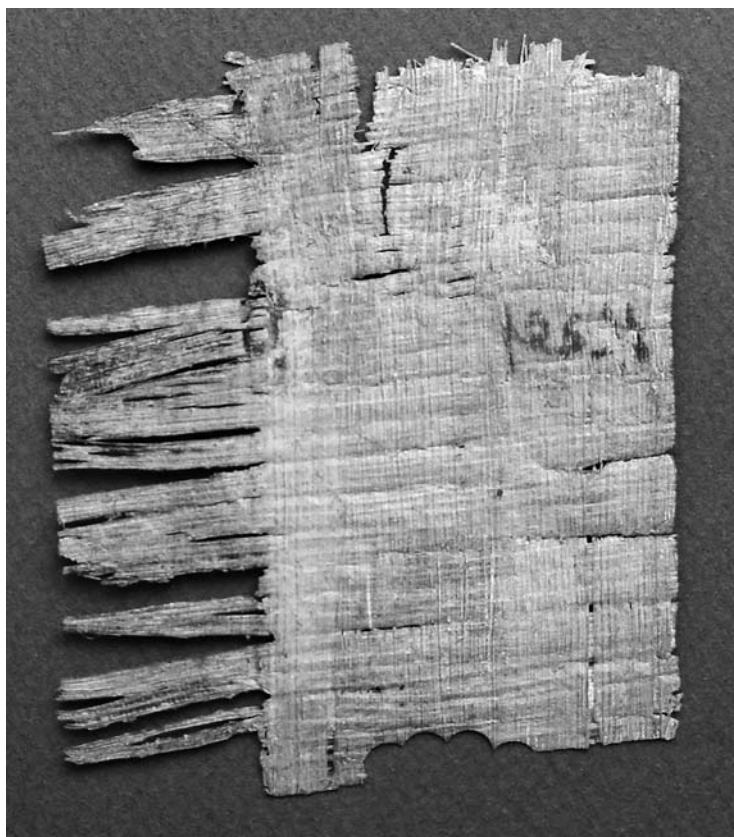
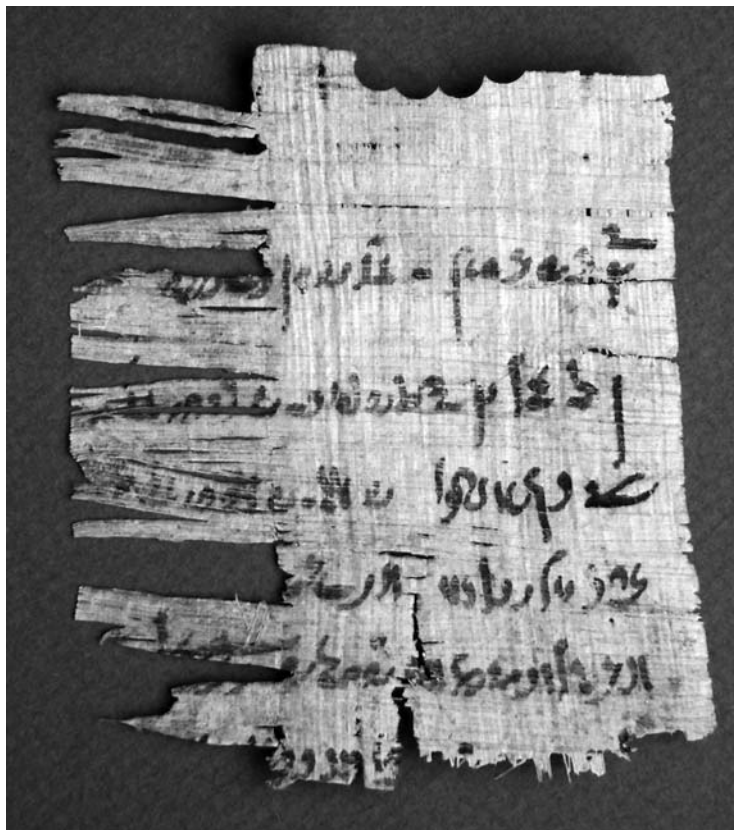
<sup>1</sup> C. Basile – A. Di Natale, *Il Museo del Papiro di Siracusa*, Syracuse 1994, p. 113 no. 104. The authors would like to thank A. Di Natale and C. Basile for their kind permission to publish the papyrus, and also like to thank the editors of ZPE and the reviewer J. Quack for their valuable comments.

<sup>2</sup> Spiegelberg was the first to point this out: W. Spiegelberg, *Demotische Papyrus von der Insel Elephantine* [= Demotische Studien 2], Milan 1908, pp. 11–12, 15.

<sup>3</sup> G. Baetens, Demotic Petitioning, *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* (forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> M. Depauw, *The Demotic Letter: A Study of Epistolographic Scribal Traditions against their Intra- and Intercultural Background*, Sommerhausen 2006, p. 329.

<sup>5</sup> G. Baetens, Demotic Petitioning, *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* (forthcoming).



## Notes

- 1 Since the events portrayed in the text seem to take place in the Arsinoite nome (cf. *infra*), the addressed royal scribe probably exercised his duties in the same region. Four royal scribes with the name Hor active in the Arsinoite nome are known from other sources: TM Per 15302 (= *PP* I 480, active in 250 BC), TM Per 15303 (= *PP* I 481 = *PP* VIII 481, active in 225–200 BC), TM Per 15304 (= *PP* I 482, active in the 3rd century BC) and TM Per 15305 (= *PP* I 483 = *PP* VIII 483, active in 114–107 BC).<sup>6</sup> Possibly, the addressee of P. Syrac. 104 can be identified with one of them.

The inversed prescript with the name of the addressee preceding the name of the sender is unusual for Demotic documents, but typical for the *mkmk* corpus, heavily influenced by the Greek ὑπομνήματα.<sup>7</sup>

- 2 The vertical stroke at the beginning of this line can hardly be anything but an abridged writing of *n-dr.t*, introducing the name of the petitioner. Similar writings have been noted by Vleeming.<sup>8</sup>

The combination of *rmṯ(.t)* + toponym can be used to identify one's place of origin.<sup>9</sup> The following expression, *nty n* + toponym, seems to express Tamounis' place of residence, where her conflict with Nechthembes takes place. The name of this place, *P3-sh-Hr*, has not been attested as such before, but probably it designates the same village as *P3-sh-Hr-ỉ.ỉr-ʿw* (TM Geo 10661), attested in P. Hawara 14 (TM 41467) and situated in the ἔξω τόποι.<sup>10</sup> If this identification is correct, *Mn-nfr* might refer to Memphis in the Arsinoite nome (TM Geo 1343, in the meris of Polemon) rather than the homonymous city in the Memphite nome (TM Geo 1344). It is unclear at what point of time Tamounis had moved from Memphis to P-seh-Hor, but the evocation of one's own identity as a stranger in a certain territory is common practice in Greek petitions from the Ptolemaic period.<sup>11</sup>

- 3 In his review, Quack suggested to read the name of the addressee as *Nḥt-Hk3*, but the writing in this papyrus seems to fit *Nḥt-H(n)b* (TM Nam 514) better: the fourth sign looks more like a *b* than like the *k3*-sign; the snake determinative is more common for the god Heneb than for the god Heka; and the *n* is also omitted in other Demotic writings of *Hnb*. Moreover, Heneb was particularly venerated in Herakleopolis, situated close to the ἔξω τόποι, where the events seem to take place.<sup>12</sup>

Sethe has argued that *shn* can be used to translate Greek titles ending on -άρχης.<sup>13</sup> In P. Count 10 (TM 44395), l. 58, the title *p3 shn tmy* appears in a list, right before *p3 sh tmy*, the κωμογραμματεύς. The editors of this text assume that the first title might be a translation of κωμάρχης.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, *p3 shn n P3-sh-Hr* might indicate that Nechthembes was the κωμάρχης of P-seh-Hor. Other Greek petitions from the Ptolemaic period complain about the misconduct of a κωμάρχης.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. F. Oates, *The Ptolemaic basilikos grammateus*, Atlanta 1995, pp. 9–10.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. O. Hor 26 (TM 48993), 31 (TM 48438); P. BM Siut 10591 Vo col. I–II (TM 53821), 10599 (TM 48653), 10600 (TM 44188); P. Fitzhugh dem. 2 (TM 51409); P. dem. mon. 5 (TM 45930; to be published by the first author and Pierre-Luc Angles); P. Oxf. Griffith 39 (TM 48545), 40 (TM 48880); P. Tebt. dem. SCA 5169.5, 8334, 8342, 8448 (to be published in *Fouilles franco-italiennes* series).

<sup>8</sup> S. Vleeming, *The Gooseherds of Hou (Pap. Hou): a Dossier Relating to Various Agricultural Affairs from Provincial Egypt of the Early Fifth Century B.C.*, Leuven 1991, p. 211.

<sup>9</sup> P. W. Pestman, *Recueil de textes démotiques et bilingues II*, Leiden 1977, p. 456.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. K. Müller, *Settlements of the Ptolemies: City Foundations and New Settlement in the Hellenistic World* [= *Studia Hellenistica* 43], Leuven 2006, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. P. Enteux. 29 (TM 3304), P. Enteux. 83 (TM 3358), P. Polit. Iud. 2 (TM 44618), PSI IV 419 (TM 2102).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the gods Heneb and Heka in theophoric names, see D. Devauchelle, Notes et documents pour servir à l'histoire du Sérapeum de Memphis (VI–X), *Revue d'Égyptologie* 51 (2000), pp. 29–31.

<sup>13</sup> K. Sethe, *Demotische Urkunden zum ägyptischen Bürgschaftsrechte vorzüglich der Ptolemäerzeit*, Leipzig 1920, pp. 106–107, 130–131. Cf. E. Seidl, *Ptolemäische Rechtsgeschichte*, second edition [Ägyptologische Forschungen 22], Glückstadt 1962, p. 73.

<sup>14</sup> W. Clarysse – D. J. Thompson, *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt*, Cambridge 2007, p. 254.

<sup>15</sup> P. Enteux. 83; P. Amh. Gr. II 33 (TM 8669), 34 a + b (TM 8670).

- 4 The verb *gm'* is used in the introduction of the narrative of other Demotic petitions as well. In P. BM Siut 10598 (TM 43409), 10599 and 10600, the formula *tw=y gm' n-dr.t NN* is used; the narrative of P. Fitzhugh dem. 2 is introduced through *NN gm' hr=y m-šs*.  
For *t't*, cf. CDD 157–158.
- 5 For *hwy (r) p3 bnr*, cf. CDD 70–71. This allegation reminds of the Greek ἔντευξις petition P. Enteux. 86 (TM 3386), in which a woman named Tetosiris complains to the strategos that her adversary is intimidating herself and her witnesses with threats of violence and expulsion from the village: λέγ[ω]ν ἀποτυπανιεῖν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐμὲ καὶ ἐγβαλεῖν ἐκ τῆς κώμης (ll. 6–7).
- 6 Quack suggested to read *twy=s*, but this expression would be rather unusual for a petition and the preserved signs are not ideal for this group. It seems more appropriate to read *hpr=y*, possibly followed by *p3*.
- 7 The open space between *i.ir-hr* and *Hr* shows that the petition must have been sealed. Probably, part of Hor's identification (*p3 sh Pr-3?*) is missing because the vertical fibres on the left side of the verso are lost.

It is highly unusual for petitions or other memoranda to contain a seal and/or an exterior address: in principle the petitioner had to submit his supplication to the authorities in person, which rendered both unnecessary. This seems to have been one of the major distinctions between ἔντευξις, ὑπομνήματα and *mkmk* on the one hand, and letters on the other hand.<sup>16</sup> There are some rare exceptions among the Greek corpus, but not a single other one in Demotic.<sup>17</sup> The reasons for this discrepancy are unclear. Possibly, Tamounis was unable to go to the royal scribe herself, because of some injury or physical impairment.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, the scribe who wrote this text might have been little acquainted with the drafting of *mkmk* and might have added an exterior address to this text, inspired by common epistolary practice.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. E. Bickermann, Beiträge zur antiken Urkundengeschichte. III. ἔντευξις und ὑπόμνημα, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 9 (1930), pp. 170–172; M. Depauw, *The Demotic Letter*, pp. 329–330.

<sup>17</sup> Only three Greek petitions are certain to contain an exterior address: P. Cairo Zen. III 59492 (TM 1130), P. Tebt. III 772 (TM 5364) and P. Tor. Choach. 3 (TM 3591). Possibly, P. Duke inv. 360 (TM 58468), SB XVIII 13881 (TM 2611), SB XXVIII 17251 (TM 47350) or P. Tebt. III 805 (TM 5388) can be added to this list, but the traces on the verso of these documents are too vague to allow certainty on the point. Lastly, there are six ὑπομνήματα without petitioning function from the archive of Zenon and one ἔντευξις without petitioning function from the archive of Kleon and Theodoros, that clearly contain an exterior address: P. Cairo Zen. III 59301 (TM 945), 59307 (TM 951), 59384 (TM 1027), 59439 (TM 1079); P. Petrie II 4 (9) = P. Petrie III 42 C (2) (TM 44593); PSI V 528 (TM 2150); PSI VI 593 (TM 2203). In the early Ptolemaic period, the distinction between these ordinary ἔντευξις and ὑπομνήματα on the one hand and letters on the other hand was not completely clear-cut yet.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. P. Enteux. 22 (TM 3297), in which the petitioner explicitly states that she is too old and weak to come to the strategos herself; therefore she has sent someone else.